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## Marciello brings baseball to visually impaired

On a Wednesday evening in late June, Needham resident Michael Marciello, MD, performs a typical evaluation on a 40-year-old baseball player. As a physiatrist at South Shore Health System’s Spine Center, he assesses the athlete’s injury, gives his diagnosis, and recommends the best course of action to get the player back to health.

This encounter seems no different than any other. But it is different.

Marciello isn’t in his office on the South Shore. Instead, he’s fulfilling his duties as the volunteer team doctor and hitting instructor for the Boston Renegades, an adaptive baseball/softball team for visually-impaired adults.

Marciello’s interest in the Renegades began five years ago when he read a story about the team in The Boston Globe. Diagnosed with a visual impairment that causes loss of color vision, the doctor and former Boston College High School baseball player was immediately intrigued. He didn’t know anything about the Renegades or the National Beep Baseball Association, but he wanted to get involved.

“When I read that article, I thought ‘this is for me,’” said Marciello. “I love baseball. And the idea of helping others who have otherwise been told they can’t compete or play a sport was a no-brainer.”

A phone call to Head Coach Rob Weissman led Marciello to volunteering at practices and games. He is now the team doctor and works with players on their hitting style - making sure the players are healthy and strong enough to get through a season. He will travel with the team to the World Series in Wisconsin from July 29 to August 5, where the Renegades will look to take home a title.

“Mike is such an asset to the team,” said Weissman. “For a long time, I think he was hesitant to share his story. But I think his own struggles with vision have helped him better relate to the players and made him a better coach because of it.”

As a physiatrist, Marciello knows how to take care of people with bumps and bruises. At each practice and game, he tapes, splints, wraps and helps injured players work through their injuries. He decides who is healthy enough to play and who should be on the disabled list. After assessing the athletes, he moves on to hitting stations and does one-on-one drills with his team.

Player Rob Dias, 40, of Somerville, works with Marciello on the intricacies of hitting. Rob places his hand on the back of Marciello’s knee to get a feel for how he loads up and prepares to drive towards the ball with his lower half. Rob then feels how Marciello’s shoulders rotate during the swing, hoping to pick up a tip on how to better hit the ball.

“You can tell he’s passionate about the sport and he’s passionate about seeing the girls and guys improve,” Dias says about his coach. “He’s a constant here.”

Marciello will be the first to tell you that baseball has always been his first love. The Renegades are now a very close second.

“Beep baseball gives visually impaired adults an outlet to be on a team and play a sport, something they were probably told many times wasn’t going to be possible,” said Marciello. “It’s just so fun to be a part of. I never want to let go of the game.”

To learn how to play Beep Baseball, visit <https://bcove.video/2tVtsx6> (<https://bcove.video/2tVtsx6>).

To learn more about the Boston Renegades, visit <https://www.blindcitizens.org/renegades/> (<https://www.blindcitizens.org/renegades/>)


Those interested in volunteering for the team should email [bostonrenegades@gmail.com](mailto:bostonrenegades@gmail.com).

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